

Living Orthodoxy



Let them not think, however,... that one should value any peace, for I know that there can be a beautiful disagreement and a most detrimental unanimity; but one must love a goodly people which has a goodly objective and is united with God... It is not good to be either too lax or excessively mettlesome, so as either to agree with everyone through docility, or to disagree with everybody through obstinance... However, when the matter concerns blatant ungodliness, then it is

more appropriate to confront fire and the sword, to ignore the demands of time and rulers and all, rather that partake of the wicked leaven or to touch the infected. The most terrible thing is to fear something more than God, and through this fear to cease to be a servant of Truth and become a traitor to the teachings of Faith and Truth

— St. Gregory the Theologian
(cited in *By Silence is God Betrayed*)

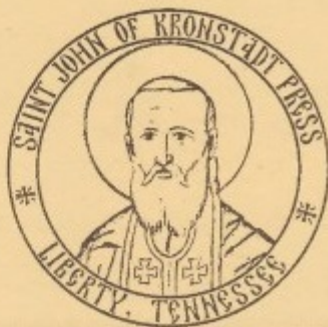
#99

(Vol. XVII, No. 3)

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Who's tinkering with the calendar now?!

Nobody is, really. But we decided that drastic measures to get *Living Orthodoxy* back on track were in order. With the agreement of the relevant postal authorities (regulations for Periodical Class mail are quite stringent, and sometimes a bit peculiar), a plan has been devised and is now being implemented. The *issue number* sequence continues without interruption, so that subscription records are unaffected (subscriptions are entered for a given number of issues, 6 per subscription year). The *volume* sequence is likewise unaffected (librarians rejoice). Only the month/year sequence is a bit unusual: The current issue (May-June 1996, #99) follows immediately upon March-April 1995, #98. [For the curious... those six "missing" issues actually do exist, with dates but no volume or issue numbers, and only in the archives of the United State Postal Service. They exist "for the record", and contain nothing of interest.] To complete the task, two issues are being mailed at once (#99 & #100), to be followed in short order by two more, #101 & #102, completing Volume XVII and the year 1996.

May we not repeat the behavior of a (perhaps apocryphal) Mexican railway train, cited during my college days as illustrative of differing perceptions and evaluations of time in various cultures: The train operated on a once a week schedule, but had been late for as long as anyone could remember. In the small village upon which our attention is fixed, it had fallen behind first a day, then two, then more — and finally a full week. The great day arrived — the train arrived precisely at the appointed time... a week late. Everyone's amazement and joy was so great that all the crew and passengers got off the train and joined the townspeople in a great fiesta in the town square. The train finally left late in the day... many hours late.

— Fr. Gregory

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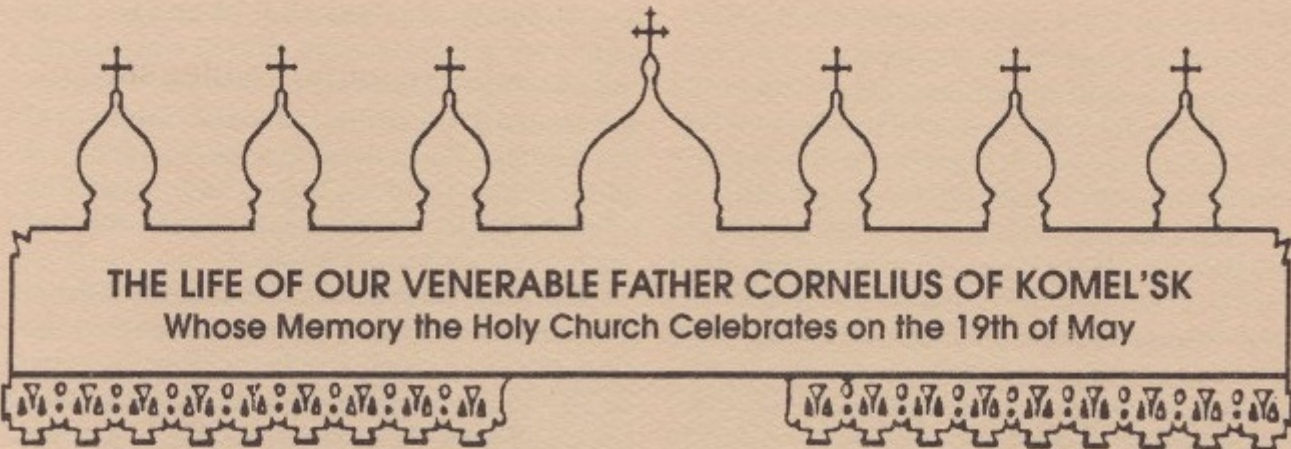
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THE LIFE OF OUR VENERABLE FATHER CORNELIUS OF KOMEL'SK

Whose Memory the Holy Church Celebrates on the 19th of May

About three and a half miles from the district city of Gryazovets in the Vologda Province, along the Yaroslavl-Vologda railroad line, stands the Holy Monastery of Saint Cornelius of Komel'sk. This monastery was a point of pilgrimage for multitudes of devout Russians, who found there a cordial welcome and spiritual consolation. Pious Christians were drawn to it by the holiness of the favorite of God, a desire to venerate his incorrupt relics and to ask his heavenly help and aid for themselves; they were also attracted by the nearby mineral springs, whose curative properties were attested by the affidavits of scientists and by multitudes of individual cases. Here hope for the healing of the sick who waited the movement of the water was nurtured by a deep faith in the favorite of God and his gracious aid.

Rostov the Great was the native city of the venerable saint, the glorious cradle of many of the great men of the Church of Russia. His parents, Theodore and Barbara by name, were pious folk, descendants of the famous noble Kriukov family. Their household flourished in riches and glories, surpassing all the other homes in the city. The father of the saint attracted the attention of the sovereign of all Russia, in whose name he was ordered to move to the royal city of Moscow, where, with his brother Lucian, he served at the court of the Great Princess Maria Ivanovna, the consort of Great Prince Basil Vasilievich the Dark.

The boy Cornelius accompanied his parents when they moved their residence to the capital; yet the young Cornelius' thoughts and aspirations were not centered on glory and honors, but rather on monasticism and the ascetic

life. When his uncle Lucian, having reached old age, received the monastic tonsure in St. Cyril's White Lake Monastery, Cornelius followed his example. At the age of twenty, he was invested with the angelic habit in the White Lake Monastery, beginning his monastic struggles under the guidance of Gennadius, an elder experienced in the spiritual life. He laid waste to his body with heavy labors, especially in the monastery's bakery, and wore iron chains on his body. During his free time, the ascetic copied out a multitude of sacred books, which long remained in the monastery's churches as a witness to his ascetic endeavors.

Cornelius did not, however, remain long in the monastery of his tonsure. Leaving it, the ascetic gave himself over to wandering and undertook a pilgrimage which included many monasteries and hermitages, so that he might avail himself of the instruction of men experienced in the spiritual life.

Having visited many communities, the venerable one arrived in Great Novgorod and stayed for a considerable time there with the wise and learned Archbishop Gennadius, the famous defender of Orthodoxy and denouncer of the heresy of the Judaizers. Perceiving the piety of the young monk, the hierarch came to love him and desired to keep him at his side and ordain him to the priesthood, but in his humility Cornelius declined so weighty an honor and, taking the archbishop's blessing, withdrew to a hermitage near Novgorod. Thither the hierarch sent him everything necessary to sustain him; he often summoned him to himself for spiritual discourse, and once even visited him at the hermitage. Soon the hundred-tongued crowd began to spread word

of the ascetic feats of the venerable one, and a multitude of people began to stream to his door, violating his solitude and stillness. This was difficult for the lover of silence to bear, and he left the environs of Novgorod for the region surrounding Tver', seeking fresh solitude.

There, he made his abode in the primeval forests of the Hermitage of St. Sabbatius. Yet even in that place his refuge was soon discovered. Thus, he wandered again from hermitage to hermitage, trying to find solitude for himself; but each place of sojourn could not be hidden from the eyes of the people.

Finally, in the year 1497, he arrived at the forest of Komel'sk, which at that time was impassable. There, he found a hut which had once been a den of thieves, and he made it his abode. The brigands entered their hut, and several times tried to attack the saint. One day, they broke into his cell, but found in it nothing but books, which they carried away with them. But, having wandered around aimlessly all night, in the morning they found themselves back at the venerable one's hut. Then, approaching him, they returned what they had stolen and withdrew, leaving their cabin to the holy one.

Many labors and dangers did the saint experience in building his new residence. Once, he arrived at his cell barely breathing, having been beaten by robbers; another time, a tree fell on him, and the pain of the blow was with him for three whole months. One day, having recovered from his infirmity, he fell down a steep slope and sustained even worse hurt than before, narrowly escaping death. Afterwards, he was again carried back to his home barely alive, with a deep wound on his head caused by a tree which had fallen on him. Furthermore, he had to endure much slander and calumny from the people, some of which even reached the ears of the Great Prince. Against all these temptations the holy one wielded a single weapon—patience. Moreover, it was not only the attacks on the saint, but also the good report of his struggles which came to the Great Prince; and he honored him as a favorite of God.

The holy one loved the place he had chosen and conceived the idea of founding a holy monastery there. He no longer turned away those who wanted to share his struggles, and

his hermitage was soon full of monks. The saint built a little wooden church which, with the blessing of Metropolitan Simon, was consecrated in 1501, dedicated to the Entrance of the All-holy Theotokos into the Temple; and on February 1st of that year, he himself was ordained to the priesthood and made abbot of the monastery he had founded.

With the passage of time, many brethren gathered around the venerable one, so that the church he had originally founded became too small. This prompted the saint to undertake the construction of a larger church. Under his direction, work was again in full swing, and each of the brethren took part in it according to his strength and abilities: "Some had the skill to erect the walls of the church, others the ability to paint holy icons; yet others to carve the crosses; and still others to copy books." Thus, "through the labors of the blessed disciples of the saint, and even more through fasting and tears, a majestic church was built. And they adorned it magnificently, like a beautiful bride, with the images of holy icons and with books." The newly-erected church was consecrated in 1515, with the blessing of Metropolitan Barlaam.

After the consecration of the church, the venerable one determined a schedule of priestly services for the brethren, appointed an ecclesiarch, and introduced into the divine services the order maintained in the great lavras. Attached to the brotherhood's refectory he built another church, dedicated to Saint Anthony the Great, the founder of the hermitic life. Later, he constructed cells for the brethren. He then built an infirmary and a kitchen within the monastery, and outside the monastery a hospice "for the rest of travellers and the poor".

Thus was one of the most remarkable of the northern monasteries built, transformed during the life of its founder into a "great lavra", in which more than ninety monks struggled at that time. And the people's love for the ascetic increased with each passing day. Multitudes came to him, desiring to pray in his monastery, to take his blessing, and to receive spiritual instruction and consolation from the holy elder. He never turned anyone away, but received all with love. And he treated the poor, the unhappy and unfortunate with

solicitous care. The monastery's pantries were always open to the poor. One day, on the patronal feast of the monastery, all the funds at hand had been spent, so that there was nothing left to give out. But just then, alms were received in the monastery from the Great Prince Basil Ivanovich—twenty-one rubles, and they were immediately distributed. Another time, a great famine ravaged the Vologda region. The monastery was continually full of crowds of the starving. Things reached such a pass that mothers abandoned their own children at the monastery gates. The saint aided all the unfortunate and fed all the starving.

For these feats of love, he was consoled by a vision. On the eve of the feast of Saint Anthony, when, after the communal service and usual rule of preparation, he sat down in his cell to rest for a while, he fell into a light sleep and saw before him the great Egyptian anchorite himself, who commanded him to follow him. The venerable saint conducted him to a broad field, on which lay heaps of prosphoras and loaves of bread; and he said: "This is for thee to give to the poor; gather it up in the lap of thy robe"; and when he began to do so, in their abundance they overflowed his robe. He then awoke, and with tears of joy marvelled at the vision; and he ordered that during his lifetime and after his death this generosity toward the poor would continue.

In establishing order within his community, the holy one carefully watched over its life: he himself made the rounds of all who labored in the fields and meadows. As with the venerable Sergius, it was the holy elder's custom to go about the brethren's cells late at night. If he heard them praying or chanting psalms quietly, he would pass on without making his presence known. But if his ears detected idleness or occupation with what was of no benefit to the soul, he would make his presence known by tapping lightly upon the window of the cell. Afterwards, in giving instruction to the brethren at the general assemblies, he would reprove such violations of the monastic way of life, though he did not accuse the guilty ones by name.

With the passage of time, as he continued to put the inner life of the community in order, the venerable one wrote his *Rule for the Mo-*

nastic Life for the brethren. And in order to impress upon his monks the importance of this Rule—whose principal precept consisted of the undeviating fulfillment of the most important of the monastic vows: the vow of obedience—he provided the brethren with a striking lesson under the following circumstances. A certain monk, the most senior of those who worked in the bakery, baked a great many loaves of bread without having asked the abbot's permission to do so, as was required by the Rule. When he learned of this, the holy elder commanded that all the loaves, of which there were two cartloads, be cast out onto the road.

The strictness of the venerable one in fulfilling the requirements of the Rule caused displeasure among the brethren and the servants of the monastery. And there were even evil men who decided to make an attempt upon the holy elder's life. The most audacious of these were two brothers employed as overseers over the workers. Several times they hid under the bridge over the River Nurma, lying in wait for the saint, eager to carry out their vile plot; but each time it happened that the venerable one was not alone, and they were afraid to do their evil deed, until finally, in torment of conscience, they resolved to confess their sin to the abbot. The guileless elder forgave them.

Just such an incident of disorder within the monastery's life caused the saint to withdraw again into the solitude he loved so well. In vain did the brethren beseech him to remain with them, but he was determined. To console his monks he did say that, although he was parting with them bodily, yet would he ever be with them in soul. He summoned the brethren to him, chose twelve of his disciples to govern the community, and asked them all to forgive him. And taking with him several of the brethren, the venerable one withdrew with them about twelve miles from his monastery, settling within the borders of Kostroma, in the dense wilderness on the banks of Lake Sura. The monks he left behind in the monastery, feeling bereft by their separation from him, decided at a general meeting to ask the elder to return; but the venerable one declined to do so.

That winter (1529), Great Prince Basil Ivanovich and his spouse undertook a pilgrimage to the Saint Cyril's White Lake Monastery,

"to entreat the Lord God to grant them a son to inherit their sovereignty". The itinerary of his pilgrimage also led the Great Prince past the Monastery of Saint Cornelius, and he had a service of supplication served there. When he learned of the elder's withdrawal, he asked the brethren the reason why Cornelius had departed for the wilderness; they replied that he had done so out of love for Christ, and asked the sovereign to "compel" their father to return to them. Fulfilling this request, the Prince sent his servants to the elder Cornelius, commanding him to appear in his monastery, there to await his return. And having given the brethren "a goodly amount of alms and supplied them with foodstuffs," he continued his journey.

On his return journey, the Great Prince met the elder Cornelius in Vologda, and the latter "rejoiced greatly over the arrival of the elder, honored him, conversed with him, begged him to entreat the Lord God to grant him a son to inherit his throne, and bade him farewell, sending him back to his monastery." Further along on his journey to Moscow, the Prince again met with the elder at Komel'sk, and commanded him "to abide in the monastery". But, pointing out that he was old and infirm, the saint besought the Great Prince "to allow him to return to the wilderness, to weep of his sins." And the Prince, "knowing his virtuous life and labors, acceded to his will."

Cornelius withdrew again into the wilderness. Yet this time he did not find there the solitude he desired; for monastic aspirants again began to seek him out. The venerable one built a cell and set off for Moscow, to ask the sovereign and the metropolitan for permission to erect a new church. At about this time, God granted the Great Prince a son, whom he named Ivan. Full of great joy, the sovereign showered the blessed one with gifts, frequently summoned him to his presence, and sent him all that was needed for his home. To the elder's request to erect a church at his hermitage, the Prince replied with a determined refusal: "He remembered the supplications and tears of the brethren in the monastery, who had begged him to compel Cornelius to dwell with them; and he therefore did not grant permission for him to erect churches at the hermitage, but earnestly urged him to take up his former la-

bors in his own monastery with his disciples." The holy elder found the Prince's admonition, and his refusal of his request, difficult to accept, and he hid himself away in the Lavra of Saint Sergius. Encountering Cornelius there, the Prince again tried to compel the saint "with great earnestness, to return to his monastery." The elder did not dare oppose the will of the Prince any further. Delighted by this, the sovereign said to him: "Father, I have heard that thy monastery lacketh towns and villages; but ask for what thou needest, and I will give it thee." The elder did not desire the good things of this world, which he had long since voluntarily renounced; he asked only that the Prince give the monastery a little forested land, that the monks might eat "their bread in the sweat of their faces." The Prince readily fulfilled the elder's request, and taking his blessing, sent the ascetic off in peace, asking him to entreat God for his health.

Great was the joy of the monks of Komel'sk when they greeted the founder of their monastery. The brethren welcomed him as though he were an angel of God, going forth to meet him, bearing crosses and icons. "Some of them kissed his hands; others touched his feet, and yet others his garments." And Abbot Cassian, who had been elected in the elder's absence, laid down his authority, remaining in obedience to his teacher. Then the venerable took up again his customary labors in his monastery, "felling trees and sowing the fields." Yet again he encountered the displeasure of the brethren. One monk, Zacchæus by name, complained of the poor quality of his clothing and asked for new garments. The elder gave him his own clothing, and he himself long went about in Zacchæus' clothes of woven bast. All of this gradually weighed upon the holy elder, and made him feel all the more strongly the advanced years which had long since come upon him. Perceiving the approach of his demise and the weakening of his powers, the saint decided to spend the rest of his days in reclusion. Having delivered a farewell exhortation to the brethren, he withdrew to the monastery of his tonsure and enclosed himself in a cell. But the brethren he left behind were unable to live without their teacher. Five elders from among them again came to the

venerable one with the request that he not leave them orphans, but return to live in solitude within his own monastery. At first the elder would not accede to their request. But when the abbot and brethren of Saint Cyril's White Lake Monastery joined the Komel'sk elders, in turn begging him to comfort the brethren, lest they disperse in their sorrow, the blessed one decided to return again to his own monastery, on condition that the community elect another abbot. They asked him whom he desired to see as abbot, and he named Lawrence. Lawrence was forthwith raised to the abbacy, and the elder returned to enclose himself in a cell, in complete solitude.

The elder, however, was fated to leave his monastery yet again. At the end of his life, in 1536, the Kazan' tartars, laying waste to the cities and settlements of Russia, reached the region of Vologda. Terrified, the people of those parts took to flight; and the monasteries also were abandoned, which the hand of the infidels likewise did not spare. When word of this misfortune reached the Elder Cornelius, he said: "Let us also do the human thing and flee, that we may show neither pride nor vainglory. It is not good to give ourselves over to misfortune. Christ Almighty Himself fled from Herod into Egypt, that others also might learn not to place themselves in peril." And the ascetic and the brethren withdrew to Ukhtom, near White

Lake. But the hand of the enemy did not smite the monastery.

Soon after his return, the venerable one sensed that his strength was utterly exhausted and his end was nigh. On the fourth Sunday after Pascha, the sick man ordered himself carried into church for the divine liturgy, that he might receive the Holy Mysteries one last time. The following day, the holy elder, having bade farewell to the brethren, ordered that the akathist hymns to the Savior and the Mother of God be read, and he peacefully surrendered his soul unto God, on May 19th, 1537, at the age of eighty-four, after living for forty-one years in asceticism in the Monastery of Komel'sk.

By the example of his life and his spiritual guidance, the great ascetic raised many men to a high level of spiritual life, of whom many themselves later became founders of monasteries and were famous for the holiness of their life. Such were the blessed Cyril of New Lake, Gennadius of Liubimsk, Herodion of Ilozersk, Adrian of Poshekhonsk, Philip of Irapsk and Daniel of Shushgorsk. All were his disciples and received the tonsure in his monastery.

*Translated from the Russian by the reader Isaac E. Lambertsen, from **The Patericon of the Holy Trinity-Saint Sergius Lavra** (Sergiev Posad: Holy Trinity-Saint Sergius Lavra Press, 1896), pp. 284-293. Copyright © 1995. All rights reserved by the translator.*

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A REPLY TO DAVID BERCOT ON THE MOTHER OF GOD

by Vladimir Moss

David Bercot is a continuing Anglican who has produced a number of cassettes on spiritual themes. In several of these, he criticizes the position of the Orthodox Church from the point of view of what he considers the classically Anglican via media — that is, a position midway between liberal Protestantism, on the one hand, and Orthodoxy and Catholicism, on the other. Bercot claims that he was very sympathetic to Orthodoxy, and was even preparing to join the Orthodox Church, but was put off by the attitude of the Orthodox to the Mother of God, which he considers to be clearly contrary to the teaching of the Pre-Nicene Church. The following is a reply to Bercot in defense of the Orthodox teaching.

I come now to Bercot's third tape, on Mary, the Mother of God. I find this the most interesting of Bercot's tapes so far, not because it is correct — I think it contains the same mixture of true and demonstrably false statements as in the earlier tapes — but because it points to a certain mystery of Divine Providence which has been little inquired into. This is the mystery of why the veneration of the Mother of God, though present in the Early Church, acquired, relatively suddenly, such a great impetus and development in the fifth century.

For I accept that there is little written evidence for the veneration of Mary in the Early Church. I do not accept that there is *absolutely no* evidence, as Bercot claims, even in the writings of the early Fathers. For example, St. Gregory the Wonderworker, a pupil of Origen and the apostle of Cappadocia, composed hymns in praise of the Holy Virgin which are just as "extravagant" as those of later Byzantine Fathers. Moreover, Bercot completely ignores the evidence from unwritten Tradition —

the iconography of the early Church (in the Roman catacombs, for example), and liturgical tradition — which does, in a quiet way, point to the great honor in which Mary was held by the early Christians. And I firmly reject Bercot's rejection of the oral traditions concerning Mary's earthly life and assumption to heaven, which, while committed to writing only in the fifth century, witness to a very strong oral tradition guarded in the Church of Jerusalem since the first century. This points to a characteristically Protestant flaw in all of Bercot's reasoning: his reliance only on written evidence — the Holy Scriptures, or the writings of the pre-Nicene Fathers, while completely ignoring all the evidence from art and oral tradition.

Having said that, I accept that the veneration of Mary takes a huge leap — not in dogmatic development, but in sheer volume and luxuriance of expression — in the fifth century. Why? Bercot offers a typically modernist, psychologizing explanation: the post-Nicene Christians felt a need for a more feminine, less wrathful God, so they elevated Mary to divine status on the analogy of the Great Earth Mother. Both as an Orthodox Christian and as a psychologist, I find this explanation *absurd*. Does he mean to say that *the whole Church*, from the Celts of Britain to the Copts of Egypt, suddenly and without any external pressure, abandoned her belief in the Trinitarian God and went back to paganism?! Remember that, to my knowledge, *nobody* throughout the whole Christian world objected to the post-Nicene veneration of Mary except a few western heretics who denied the virginity of Mary and were refuted in two books by St. Jerome already in the fourth century. It follows that if Bercot is right the Savior's promise that the Church would prevail against the

gates of hell is wrong, and the whole Church fell away from the truth in the fifth century, only to be recreated by a few continuing Anglicans 1500 years later!

I offer another explanation. It is only a hypothesis, and I may well be wrong. But I think it fits the facts much better than Bercot's explanation, while removing the necessity of concluding that the whole Church apostasized in the fifth century — a conclusion that Bercot does not explicitly draw, but which must be drawn if his argument is correct.

The first point that needs to be made is that the growth in the public veneration of Mary coincided with the debates over the term *Theotokos* at the Third Ecumenical Council in Ephesus. That Council decreed that henceforth hymns to Christ and the Saints should always conclude with a hymn to the Mother of God, a rule that is followed to this day in the liturgical practice of the Orthodox Church. The Council's decree naturally stimulated a great deal of hymnography and iconography glorifying the Mother of God, which continues to this day. This did not mean that the cult of Mary became more important than that of Christ, as Bercot quite wrongly asserts — a cursory examination of the liturgical texts of the Orthodox Church demonstrates that all services begin with prayers to one or other of the Persons of the Trinity (Vespers and Matins, for example, begin with a prayer to the Holy Spirit), and that prayers to God are far more frequent than prayers to the Mother of God and the Saints, especially in the central service of the Divine Liturgy. But it is certainly true that the veneration of the Mother of God became more prominent, in the sense of more public.

However, the decrees of the Third Ecumenical Council provide only a partial explanation of the facts. We still need to explain why the pre-Nicene Fathers said so little about the Mother of God, and in language that was so restrained by compari-

son with the language we find employed in later centuries. I think the explanation is to be found in a principle that we find exemplified throughout the history of Divine Revelation: the principle, namely, that while the whole truth is committed to God's people, certain aspects of the truth are concealed from the outside world at certain times because a premature revelation of them would be harmful to the acceptance of the Christian Gospel as a whole.

Let us take as an example the most cardinal doctrine of the Holy Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity is implicit even in the first chapter of Genesis, where we read of the Father creating the material world through His Word, the Son, and with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, Who broods like a bird over the waters of the abyss. And in the creation of man the multi-Personed nature of God is clearly hinted at in the words: "Let Us make man in Our image..." And yet the mystery is only gradually revealed in the course of the Old Testament, and becomes fully explicit only on the Day of Pentecost.

Take another example — the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ. In the Synoptic Gospels this mystery is only partially revealed, more emphasis being placed on the full Humanity of Christ. In the Gospel of St. John, the veil is lifted on this mystery, and it is clearly explicit in the Epistles and in Revelation. So why did the Synoptic Evangelists not declare the mystery openly? Because they did not know it, as the Arians and the modern heretics would have it? Of course not! The mystery is there, in Matthew, Mark and Luke, for everyone with eyes to see and ears to hear. So why is not made as explicit there as in John?

The Holy Fathers provide us with the answer. They explain that John wrote his Gospel later, after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., not in order to correct the earlier Gospels, but in order to "fill in the gaps" which they, under the influence of the Holy

Spirit, had deliberately left unfilled for the time being. The first three Evangelists faithfully reflect the general course of Christ's teaching, which did not involve a public, explicit confession of His Divinity, for which the people (and even His closest disciples) were not yet ready — and also because, as St. Paul says, "none of the princes of this world knew [this], for had they known [it], they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (I Cor 2:8). Indeed, St. Ignatius the God-bearer, who was a disciple of St. John, says that certain facts were concealed from the devil, such as the virginity of Mary, because, had he known them, he would not have stirred up the people to kill Christ and so bring in the salvation of the world. Moreover, we see from Acts that the earliest sermons of St. Peter and St. Stephen again did not emphasize the Divinity of Christ, but rather concentrated on His Messiahship. One step at a time: for the Jews, it was necessary to demonstrate that Christ was the Messiah before going on (in private, perhaps) to the deeper mystery of His Divinity — and St. Matthew, who wrote in Hebrew for the Jews, undoubtedly follows this same method under the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit. After the fall of Jerusalem, however, when the power of the Jews had been broken, and when Christian heretics such as Cerinthus arose openly denying the Divinity of Christ, a more explicit affirmation of the mystery became necessary. And that was what St. John provided in his writings.

Now let us turn to the mystery of Mary, the Mother of God. As St. John of Damascus points out, the mystery of Mary is the mystery of the Incarnation, and the glory of Mary derives wholly from the glory of her being chosen to be the Mother of God. All the titles and honor we ascribe to her do not add to, but express that original glory; they are a direct consequence of her being, in the words of St. Photius the

Great, "the minister of the mystery". For only a being of surpassing holiness could have given her flesh to the All-Holy Word of God, becoming the new Eve, as Saints Justin and Irenæus point out, to Christ's new Adam.

But just as the glory of Christ Himself was temporarily concealed for the sake of the more effective long-term propagation of the Gospel, so the glory of Mary was concealed — from the world, but not from the Church, — until the time when it was safe to do so — that is, when idolatry had been conquered and the dogmas of the Divinity of Christ and the Mother of God had been defined in theologically precise terms. Until that time, however, there was a real danger that a world in which paganism was still strong, and female goddesses, as Bercot rightly points out, were common, would have conceived of Christ and His Mother as two gods on a par with Jupiter and Juno. And indeed, as Bercot again rightly points out on the basis of the writings of St. Epiphanius of Cyprus, in the fourth century there existed a heresy which consisted in the worship of the Mother of God and the offering of sacrifices to her. That is why the Apostles and their successors preached the truths of the faith to the pagan world in a definite order, with each successive stage beginning only when the previous stage was firmly established in the minds of their hearers. First came the teaching about God; then about the Incarnation and the Redemption; then about the Church and the sacraments; and then about the Mother of God.

The Church displayed a similar reticence with regard to another of her cardinal doctrines — that of the Eucharist. When the Lord first expounded this mystery, many even of His disciples left Him (John 6:66). It is not surprising, therefore, that the Church should have refrained from preaching this doctrine to the pagan world, and kept it even from her

catechumens until after they had actually partaken of the sacrament. Holy things must not be given to "swine", to those incapable of understanding them, lest the swine trample on them by interpreting them in their own swinish, carnal way. In the same way, the doctrine of the Mother of God, while always known to the inner circle of the Church, was not preached from the housetops until the world itself had become solidly Christian.

An illustration of the wisdom of this principle is found in the life of St. Dionysius the Areopagite, the disciple of St. Paul and first bishop of Athens. When he first met the Mother of God, as he confesses in a letter, he was so struck by her extraordinary, other-worldly beauty, that he was tempted to think that she was in fact a goddess. It was not until the Apostles took him aside and explained that she was not herself Divine by nature, but the created Mother of the pre-eternal Creator, that he abandoned his error. If such a holy man as St. Dionysius was tempted to make such an error, we can imagine what would have been the consequences if the Apostles had openly preached the Mother of God to the pagan world! And we see in modern Roman Catholic mariolatry what happens to the understanding of Mary even among Christians when these Christians lose the salt of the Holy Spirit and descend again into the corruption of paganism.

If the Catholics have become like the pagan Greeks, the Protestants have embraced the opposite error of the Jews, refusing to see anything special in the Holy Virgin, sometimes even denying her holiness and virginity. To be fair to Bercot, he never descends to such blasphemy, and is willing to accept both her virginity and her exceptional blessedness. He does not even object to the term *Theotokos*, or Mother of God, although, revealingly, he never uses it himself.

But Bercot displays a definite Protestant bias and superficiality in his interpretation of those passages in the Holy Scriptures in which Christ speaks to or of His Mother. In all these passages (Matt 12:46-50; Luke 2:48-49, 8:19-21; John 2:4, 19:26-27), Bercot interprets Christ as "putting down" His Mother, as if He needed to suppress an incipient rebellion on her part, an attempt to impose her will upon Him. Nothing could be further from the truth. Although the Orthodox do not believe in the absolute sinlessness of the Mother of God, at any rate before Pentecost, and admit that she may have had moments of doubt, hesitation or imperfect comprehension, there can be no question of any conflict between her and her Son. Christ was not so much rebuking His Mother in these passages, as teaching a general truth which the carnally and racially-minded Jews very much needed to absorb: the truth, namely, that closeness to God depends, not on racial affiliation, but on spiritual kinship. Moreover, when He said "My mother and My brethren are those which hear the word of God and keep it" (Luke 8:21), He was not excluding His physical mother from the category of those close to Him. On the contrary, it was precisely because she, more than all women, knew the word of God and kept it, thereby acquiring spiritual kinship with God, that Mary was counted worthy to give birth to the Word of God in the flesh.

Bercot makes another error of interpretation when he says that Mary was not one of the first witnesses of the Resurrection. The oral tradition of the Church affirms that Mary was in fact the very first person to see the Risen Christ. Moreover, Bercot misses a fact about the Gospel narratives of the Resurrection which several of the patristic commentators point out: the fact, namely, that the woman referred to as "Mary, the mother of James and Joses"

(Matt 27:56) and "the other Mary" (Matt 27:61, 28:1) was in fact the Mother of God. For the sons of Joseph were James, the first bishop of Jerusalem, Simon, the second bishop of Jerusalem, Jude, one of the twelve apostles, and Joses; which meant that Mary was in law, if not by blood, their mother, "the mother of James and Joses". St. Matthew conceals this fact for the same reason that the Mother of God is concealed throughout the Gospels and in the first four centuries of the Christian preaching — because it was dangerous to reveal her great glory and pre-eminent closeness to Christ before the doctrine of Christ Himself, perfect God and perfect Man, had been firmly established in the world as a whole. Moreover, if it had been said that the first witness of Christ's Resurrection had been His Mother, the Jews would have seized on this to pour scorn on the fact, saying: "What trust can we place in the visions of an hysterical woman, crazed with grief over the death of her only son?..."

Bercot again misses the point concerning Christ's entrusting the Holy Virgin to St. John the Apostle. This was actually a very surprising thing for the Lord to do, for the Virgin did have a family — the sons of Joseph referred to above — and the normal custom in the East would have been for them to take her into their care. But here again, as often in the Gospel, the Lord indicates that spiritual kinship, kinship in the Church, is higher and deeper than kinship after the flesh or in law. Of course, the Lord does not explicitly say that in becoming the mother of St. John, the Virgin became the Mother of the whole Church. But as the Fathers from the earliest centuries point out, there is a literal sense to Holy Scripture and a symbolical sense, sometimes several symbolical senses; and while the literal sense is true and must not be distorted, it must not be allowed to obscure the deeper, symbolical sense, which is equally true. But obscure

it is just what Bercot and other Protestant writers constantly do.

This is particularly evident in his discussion of John 2. If Mary was really sinning by asking the Lord to intercede for the married couple, why did He then fulfill her request and change the water into wine? No: the Lord's "rebuke" of Mary should be interpreted, according to St. Ephraim the Syrian (fourth century) as follows: "Why are you asking me to carry out the miracle of the Eucharist, the mystery of My union with My Bride, the Church, of which the miracle of changing water into wine at this earthly wedding is a symbol and foreshadowing, when the hour of My Passion, when I will redeem My Bride by the shedding of My Blood, is not yet come?"

Bercot displays a similar obtuseness when discussing the fact that Mary was not present at the Last Supper. Since the Passover meal was a family occasion, he says, Mary's absence shows that the Lord was "putting her in her place" and placing his bonds with the apostles above all carnal bonds. Well, it is true, as we have already seen, that the Lord often emphasizes the superiority of spiritual bonds to carnal ones. But Mary was most closely related to Him, as we have already said, both spiritually and by blood.

In any case, the Last Supper did not require the presence of Mary for a quite different reason. At this Supper the Lord instituted the eternal Priesthood after the order of Melchizedek through participation in His Body and Blood. But the Virgin was not a priest herself, since women cannot become priests. Nor did she need to partake in the Eucharist then, insofar as His Body and Blood was the same Flesh she had given Him at the Annunciation after the descent of the Holy Spirit upon her. In fact, without the ministry of the Virgin at the Incarnation neither Christ's ministry at the Cross and the Resurrection nor that

of the Apostles after Pentecost would have been possible. For if the Apostles, through the priestly gift bestowed on them, multiplied the Church to the ends of the earth, the Virgin, having given birth to the High Priest Himself, may be said to have given birth to the Church, to be the Mother of the Body of which He is the Head to all generations. Indeed, in a deeper sense the Virgin is not only the Mother of the Church, but the Church herself — for if Christ is the New Adam and the Head of the Church, and Mary is the New Eve and “flesh of His flesh”, then through the mystery of marriage the Virgin = the New Eve = the Church is the Body and Bride of Christ....

It is in the context of this mystical relationship between Christ and the Holy Virgin that we must understand the extraordinary epithets that the Church bestows on her, such as mediatrix and Queen of Heaven. At this point, however, it is important to distinguish the Orthodox position from that of the Roman Catholics and from that of certain Orthodox who have been somewhat infected by the Roman point of view. Contrary to the Roman teaching, the Holy Virgin was conceived in original sin, and therefore was as much in need of salvation as any other mortal. Moreover, as St. John Chrysostom says, it is possible that she committed some actual sins, although these could only have been minor ones resulting from her less than perfect knowledge of the Ministry of her Son before she received complete enlightenment at Pentecost. The salvation of the world was effected by Christ alone, the only Mediator between God and man, for He alone is both God and Man. At the same time, Christ could not have become man without the cooperation of a human being who was both humble enough to receive the Word of God into her flesh without being destroyed by Him and believing enough to consent to the mystery without doubt-

ing: “Be it unto me according to thy word.” To say, as Bercot says, that Christ could have effected the salvation of the world in some other way if the Virgin had refused is to indulge in idle hypothesis-making which illumines nothing. For the fact is that the Virgin did not refuse and God did not choose another person or another method.

Now, having entered into such an extraordinarily intimate union with God, who can doubt that the Virgin has become deified, “a partaker of the Divine nature”, as St. Peter puts it (II Peter 1:4), or “on the border between the created and Uncreated natures”, as St. Gregory Palamas puts it? And, this being so, who can doubt that all her petitions are granted by God, that her “mediation” before God, in the sense of intercession for mankind, is always heard? It is not that what she demands she always gets, as the Romans blasphemously say; for that would imply that the creature can now dictate to the Creator, the pot to the Potter. No: the Virgin is always heard by God because she never asks for anything that is not in accordance with His will. Like the perfect wife, she both knows the will of her Husband and wills it herself, so that she neither compels Him nor is herself compelled by Him “Whose service is perfect freedom.”

St. Paul says: “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (3:17). And again: “He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit” (I Cor 6:17). Where there is such perfect spiritual union and freedom, the distinctions between Master and servant, Creator and creature become, if not less real than before, at any rate less prominent. The Protestants are very jealous to preserve God’s rights and sovereignty; but they forget that God Himself “emptied Himself” of His Divine rights, and became a servant to His own creatures, so that they should acquire His rights and privileges. As the Fathers say: “God became man so that men

should become gods", and the word "gods" means what it says — the saints truly become gods by grace. For if the Holy Scriptures call Christians, even before they are completely freed from sin, "brothers" and "friends" and "sons of God", of what glory will they not be accounted worthy when they are completely freed from sin, in the life of the age to come? "God stood in the congregation of the gods, and in the midst He shall stand out among gods... I said: ye are gods, and all of you sons of the Most High" (Ps 81:1,6; John 10:34). And if this is true of all the saints, how can it be denied of the Virgin Mother of God, she who even at the beginning of her ministry was already "full of grace", and who by her offering herself as "the minister of the mystery" made it possible for all men to become gods? And if, as St. Paul says, the saints shall judge angels (I Cor 6:3), how can it be hyperbole to say that she, the mother of all the saints, is "more honorable than the Cherubim and more glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim"? Indeed, if Christ, the New Adam, is the King of Heaven, how can she, the New Eve, be denied her rightful place at His side as the Queen of Heaven? For it is of her that the Prophet David spoke when he sang: "at Thy right hand stood the queen, arrayed in vesture of inwoven gold, adorned in varied colors" (Ps 45:8).

The mystery of Mary is the mystery of the deification of man. The path she traversed from humility on earth to glory in heaven is the path that all Christians hope to traverse. And while it was God's will that she should remain in the background until the ministry of Her Son should be completed and firmly established in the world through the teaching of the Fathers, so it is God's will now that her glory should be revealed; so that all men should see the

hope that is set before them and strive for it with redoubled zeal. And to that end God has bestowed on her the grace of miracles and the fulfillment of all godly petitions, as is witnessed by thousands upon thousands of Christians in all countries and in all generations. Only the blindest bigotry could deny all these witnesses, or ascribe them all to the workings of Satan. Rather, it can only be satanic ingratitude and envy, or at best blindness to the true depth of the mystery of the Incarnation, that seeks to detract from the glory of the Virgin, whose glory is inseparable from the glory of her Son, and from the glory of all true Christians.

Let me end, then, with a witness from the Early, Pre-Nicene Church, that of St. Gregory the Wonderworker: "Thy praise, O most holy Virgin, surpasses all laudation, by reason of the God Who took flesh and was born of thee. To thee every creature, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth, offers the meet offering of honor. For thou hast been indeed shown forth to be the true cherubic throne, Thou shinest as the very brightness of light in the high places of the kingdoms of intelligence, where the Father, Who is without beginning, and Whose power thou hadst overshadowing thee, is glorified; where also the Son is worshipped, Whom thou didst bear according to the flesh; and where the Holy Spirit is praised, Who effected in thy womb the generation of the Mighty King. Through thee, O thou full of grace, is the Holy and Consubstantial Trinity known in the world. Together with thyself deem us also worthy to be made partakers of thy perfect grace in Jesus Christ our Lord, with Whom and with the Holy Spirit, be glory to the Father, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen."

BY SILENCE IS GOD BETRAYED

BY FR. VICTOR POTAPOV

4. SELF-JUSTIFICATION OR REPENTANCE ?

We shall be condemned at the Last Judgement, brethren,
not because we have not wrought miracles
or because we have not theologized,
but we shalt be condemned
because we have not wept for our sins.
— St. John of the Ladder

The “precepts of men” mentioned by Prophet Isaiah, substitute, for repentance, self-justification and indulging in human weakness, and teach man to serve what is temporal rather than what is eternal.

A vivid example of this was provided last autumn by Patriarch Alexei II himself. Speaking at Georgetown University, in Washington, D.C., he said:

“I could have come out with public condemnation of the anti-religious persecutions. Even under Khrushchev, I don’t think they would have sent me to prison; I would simply have lived out my days somewhere in a monastery, as one of my fellow bishops had to [How horrible! Imagine a monk ending up in a monastery! - V.P.].

“But at the time I had another consideration on my mind. The Lord, who called me to the episcopacy, has bound me with indissoluble bonds to my flock and made me responsible for it. To this day I shudder at the thought of what would have become of my flock, if by my own resolute actions I had left it without Holy Communion, without the possibility of going to church, if I had left children without baptism, the dying without final consolation. [...]

“I know that I would have committed a great, inefaceable sin if, concerned with my own moral reputation, I had abandoned the administration of my diocese and betrayed my flock by allowing the militant atheists to behead it (“Patriarch Alexei II at Georgetown University,” *Nezavisirnaya Gazeta*, Jan. 7, 1992, [in Russian]).”

Here again is the favorite theory of the Moscow Patriarchate: Compromise has saved the Church. Juggling with the conscience has made it possible for the Church to perform the sacraments. But the Church does not need to be “saved” by us, rather it is we who are in

need of salvation which only the Church can provide.

And what about the flock of the disgraced bishop mentioned in the Patriarch’s speech, who “ended his days ...in a monastery”, having “publicly denounced the antireligious persecutions?” Did that flock remain without the Sacraments? If we take the Patriarch’s statement to its logical conclusion, one presumes that that bishop had committed a “great, inefaceable sin” by raising his voice against the persecution of the Church. Is it really possible to suggest that during that time of persecutions this hierarch “betrayed his flock” by concerning himself only with his “moral reputation”? Never! Most emphatically not! The disgraced hierarch acted as Christ, the Chief Shepherd, has commanded all servants of the Church: *The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep* (Jn. 10: 11).

The hierarch whom the Patriarch had in mind, but did not name, is none other than the confessor-bishop Ermogen (Golubev).¹ Archbishop Ermogen is the only hierarch of the

¹ The Paris-based journal *Vestnik RSKhD* (Herald of the Russian Christian Movement) (Nos. 87-88, 1968, pp. 4-7; 15-17) reports the following biographical information on Archbishop Ermogen: Born in 1895, educated at the Moscow Theological Academy. In 1920, he took monastic vows and was ordained priest-monk by Patriarch Tikhon himself. In 1923, he was elevated to the rank of archimandrite and appointed superior of the Kiev-Caves Lavra.

1931, Archimandrite Ermogen was arrested and sentenced to prison camp for 10 years. Upon completing his term, he settled in Central Asia. In the early 1950s, he served as priest in Samarkand. In 1953, he was ordained bishop of Tashkent and Central Asia. The address delivered by him at his consecration is characteristic of the splendid personality of this courageous pastor:

“I am happy to be able to testify before the whole

Church of Russia who, during the period of the Khrushchev persecutions (late 1950s - early 1960s, when the present Patriarch began his dizzying ascent up the hierarchical ladder) managed things so that not a single church was shut down in his Diocese of Tashkent. Archbishop Ermogen thus refutes the false assertion that appeasement preserves the Church.

We are grateful to Patriarch Alexis II for not letting us forget Vladika Ermogen. Certainly, future generations of Orthodox Russians will remember Archbishop Ermogen with love and gratitude as a man who had sacrificed himself for the good of the Church of Christ and as a living example of a hierarch who, despite living in difficult times, overcame the temptations of Sergianism.

The *Russky Vestnik* ("Russian Herald," No. 13, March 25 - Apr. 1, 1992) article, "A Meeting with the Patriarch", concludes with a discussion of the problem of the hierarchs and clerics of the Moscow Patriarchate taking part in the clandestine operations of the KGB. In the article the Patriarch stated unambiguously:

"We do not accept unsubstantiated accusations; let them support them with documents. Within the last few years every hierarch has associated with the authorities, particularly with the government's Council on Religious Affairs, where there were more than enough representatives of the KGB. Should it be proved that the ties of one or another priest or bishop have caused harm to the Church or his neighbor, this is a sin for which he must bear the responsibility. But if no such harm has been done, then why all this commotion, what are

Church that my past is in God. For the Lord, even in the days of my youth, I rejected much that attracts man in this world. My will served Him. And even if I sinned as a man, yet have I never turned my back on Him, my Lord; I have always been faithful to His Holy Church and my arm has never been stretched out to any alien god."

Vladika Ermogen became a bishop before Stalin's death. The last bishop appointed during the era of cruel dictatorship, he became, as it were, an apostle of destalinization with regard to the relations between the Church and the state. Under the Khrushchev government, particularly during 1959 and 1960, in accordance with an official directive, the local authorities began to destroy the structure of the Church. For his vigorous defense of the Faith, he was removed from the administration of his diocese. In 1962, he was appointed Archbishop of Kaluga. In 1964, he was the first to undertake a campaign for the liberation

the real reasons for this campaign to "expose" the clergy?"

I have no desire whatever for the Patriarch to accept unsubstantiated charges. It is indeed essential to produce documents. Let us return to the case of Archbishop Ermogen.

On December 22, 1967, the present Patriarch, then Archbishop Alexis of Tallinn and Estonia, comptroller of the Moscow Patriarchate, dispatched to Archbishop Ermogen the resolution of Patriarch Alexis I (Simansky), which stated that the disgraced bishop had been "retired" to the Zhirovitsky Monastery in 1965, because

"...at the time there was no appropriate vacant see. A number of sees have become vacant over these two years, but there were also candidates for those sees who were more eligible [i. e., loyal Sergianists, - V.P.] than His Grace Ermogen, under whom problems had arisen in the dioceses which he had consecutively occupied (Tashkent, Omsk, Kaluga), and each time we had to exert ourselves to resolve them and undertake to transfer him to a new see.

"[...] In the Zhirovitsky Monastery the most favorable conditions were created for him [i. e. Archbishop Ermogen, - V.P.] both as regards his day to day life, and unimpeded serving and the preaching of the Word of God. However, His Grace has not been satisfied with the conditions created for him, repeatedly expressed his displeasure, with the alleged injustice committed against him and thus disturbed the religious community.

"[...] At the present time the matter is such that the mood of His Grace, as expressed in the tone and character of his statement, does not

of the Church from the captivity by the godless Soviet bureaucracy. In the summer of 1965, Archbishop Ermogen headed a delegation of eight bishops to Patriarch Alexis I, demanding the rescinding of the Council's decisions in view of their non-canonicity. For this action, Archbishop Ermogen was "persuaded" to go into retirement, and the Zhirovitsky Monastery was designated as place of residence.

Nevertheless, while in retirement, he spoke out repeatedly against the Moscow Patriarchate's policy of accommodation. After the death of Patriarch Alexis I, all the best forces of the Russian Church dreamed of Archbishop Ermogen's being elected Patriarch. However, Vladika Ermogen, who at that time was the most senior hierarch of the Russian Church, was not invited to the Council, and up to the time of his repose, on April 7, 1978, he remained under virtual house arrest.

inspire hope that there will not be a recurrence of what had happened with him in Tashkent, Omsk and Kaluga, and it is up to him to help the Synod terminate his state of retirement and to appoint him to a diocese (*Vestnik RSKhD*, No. 87-88, 1968, p. 8, in Russian).

What had taken place in the dioceses occupied by Archbishop Ermogen, and what was the nature of the "problem" which had "invariably arisen"? Archbishop Ermogen addresses them in his detailed response to Patriarch Alexis I, published in the same issue of the *Vestnik RSKhD*:

"I must particularly emphasize that in all the dioceses where I happened to serve, my activity as a bishop was always conducted within the framework of the law: there was never a single legal charge made against me; I have never been called to account for either criminal or administrative improprieties. True, there were 'complications' with the agents of the state, but in all these instances of 'complications' the law was on my side, while on the side of the agents were arbitrary requirements not based on Soviet law.

"The greatest 'complications' were in Tashkent. But what were the reasons for those complications?

"The first reason for the 'complications' was my refusal to plenipotentiary Voronichev to co-facilitate the closure of the church in the village of Lunacharskoe, near Tashkent. This church, thanks to the absence of any legal basis for its closure, has remained open to this day. All throughout my administration of the Diocese of Tashkent, not a single temple was shut down within its territory, while in the same period a number of dioceses have suffered waves of mass closures of churches.

"The second reason for 'complications' was the construction of the Cathedral in Tashkent. This building was the largest church construction in our Church undertaken over the past 50 years since the restoration of the Patriarchate.

"[...] During my service in Omsk there were in general no complications. It would hardly be possible to take for a 'complication' the fact that I testified as a witness in the case of a warden of one of the closed churches in connection with the sending of a complaint to N.S. Kntshchev protesting the illegal closure of the church!!! To indict a citizen for being summoned to court as a witness is juridically absurd.

"My service in the Kaluga Diocese was under two plenipotentiaries: first under V. A.

Smolin, and afterwards under F.P. Riabov [the same Riabov who, as recently as the time of Perestroika, was hindering the opening of the Optina Hermitage in every possible way - V.P]. Basically, complications began to arise in connection with the expansion of the roster of clergy of the diocese and the filling of vacancies with priests (*ibid.*, 9-15)."

While Archbishop Ermogen refused to place himself in a position of blind obedience to the commands of the enemies of the Church, and for this was deprived of his see, the hierarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate, obedient to the militant atheists, gave themselves over entirely to the authority of the godless, fulfilling their every desire and assignment, including persecution of their brethren in Faith. Frequently, this servility took on absurd forms. Archbishop Ermogen, in his same response to Patriarch Alexis I, relates the advice given him by the late Metropolitan Pitirim of Krutitsa:

"To avoid all manner of complications, do as follows: When a priest or a member of the parish council comes to see you on any ecclesiastical issue, listen to him, and then send him to the plenipotentiary, with the instruction that having spent time with the latter, he is to return to you. When he returns and reports to you concerning this, call the plenipotentiary and ask him what he said to your visitor. And what the official said to him, you tell him too (*ibid.*, p. 10)."

Thus the metropolitan highest in seniority after the Patriarch indicated to a diocesan bishop that in his ecclesiastical administration he must be for his clergy and flock a mouthpiece for the implementation of the directives of an atheist, a foe of the Church.

From the above it becomes clear who it was that "caused harm to the Church and to his neighbor", and who benefitted... Let us recall the words of Patriarch Alexis II:

"Should it be proved that the ties of one or another priest or bishop have caused harm to the Church or their neighbor, this is sin for which they must bear the responsibility."

Who will be held accountable for the persecution of Archbishop Ermogen?

In his address at Georgetown University, the Patriarch spoke about the self-preservation of the Church as though it were one of the most important principles of Her existence. But is this really Her primary concern? In this regard

let us turn to the thoughts of a theologian whom the Patriarch loves to quote in his speeches — the late Protopresbyter Alexander Schmemmann:

"The Church does not exist for Herself, and the inner driving force of Her life is not self-preservation. Therefore, the line dividing the genuine and justified preservation of the Church from the temptation of "self-preservation" is always very thin and all too often undetectable by a vast number of churchmen: when the Church community begins, almost unconsciously, to serve itself rather than the mission of the Church in the world; when believers begin to perceive the Church as existing only for them and for the satisfaction of their "religious needs", and in these needs their ecclesial skills, in their spiritual satisfaction they see the measure of everything in the life of the Church. To all appearances everything is just as it was, magnificent, prayerful, comforting — but below the surface it is already distorted by a subtle, a most subtle spiritual egotism and egocentrism! Thus, should it not be of primary concern to ecclesiastical conscience to remember this dividing line, lest the true preservation of Church be transformed into an ambiguous, tempting, and thus spiritually dangerous self-preservation" (*Vestnik RSKhD*, No. 106, 1972, p. 256).

In 1922, the holy Hieromartyr Benjamin (Kazansky), Metropolitan of Petrograd wrote in a letter-testament to his disciples and fellow pastors:

"Strange are the reasonings of some (perhaps) believing pastors, — that it is necessary to preserve vitality, *i. e.* to give up everything for their sake. Then what is Christ for? The Church is saved by Christ, not by the partisan of Platon, Benjamin, etc. The point on which they are trying to insist is destruction for the Church. One should neither spare oneself for the sake of the Church, nor sacrifice the Church for the sake of oneself. A time of judgement is at hand. People are sacrificing everything even for the sake of their political beliefs... Should not Christians, all the more so priests, show the same courage, even unto death, if they have any faith in Christ, in the life to come?!" (Archpriest M. Polsky. *Novye Mucheniki Rossiiskie*, Jordanville, N.Y. 1949, vol. I, pp. 60-61).

None of the biographical sketches of Patriarch Alexis II, published during his stay in the

USA in the autumn of 1991, mentioned the important fact that His Holiness had served as comptroller of the Moscow Patriarchate for nearly a quarter of a century. It is no secret that, before *perestroika*, the person in this position was actually the Number One man in the Church.

It should be noted that in his capacity as the Patriarch's comptroller, Patriarch Alexis II not only transmitted the Synod's decree to the disgraced Archbishop Ermogen, sending him into retirement at a monastery, but also wired a message to the diocesan hierarchs forbidding them to communicate with the banished archpastor. Moreover, it was the present Patriarch who communicated the resolution of the Patriarchate suspending Fathers Nikolai Eshliman and Gleb Yakunin from performing divine services for having dared to raise their voices in defense of the Church by telling their bishops one bitter truth. (Incidentally, according to Fr. Gleb Yakunin, Archbishop Ermogen, for this defense incurred his exile to the monastery,)

"As of today the actions of the Church authorities, who persecuted the courageous Moscow priests Nikolai Eshliman and Gleb Yakunin, have not been condemned by anyone, [writes Fr. George Edelshtein in his article entitled "Reading and Rereading a Classic" (a brochure, Monastery Press, Montreal, 1991)]. These persecutors sit on the Holy Synod, as before. These persecutors maintain that it is they, the *nomenclatura* figures of the Communist Party, they, the blatant and secret collaborators with the KGB and with the Party elite, who are the spiritual heirs of the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia, since it is they who have saved the Church by their firm and unshakable standing in Sergianism. They attempt to persuade us that if all the bishops had stood up against the Communist System, the cannibals would have left not a single bishop alive, and the Church would not exist in Russia today."

The leaders of the Moscow Patriarchate are trampling underfoot the true promise of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who said: *I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it* (Matt 16:18).

The activities of bishops and priests, built upon compromises with the godless, have resulted in moral decay within the Moscow Patriarchate. Compromise with evil cannot

result in spiritual peace. Any "peace" arrived at by this means is false. Falsehood has no place in the Church, just as in it there is no place for Satan, the father of lies. There is nothing more terrible than to reconcile oneself to evil and to become accustomed to it.

"Let them not think, however,... that one should value any peace, for I know that there can be a beautiful disagreement and a most detrimental unanimity; but one must love a goodly people which has a goodly objective and is united with God... It is not good to be either too lax or excessively mettlesome, so as either to agree with everyone through docility, or to disagree with everybody through obstinance... However, when the matter concerns blatant ungodliness, then it is more appropriate to confront fire and the sword, to ignore the demands of time and rulers and all, rather that partake of the wicked leaven or to touch the infected. The most terrible thing is to fear something more than God, and through this fear to cease to be a servant of Truth and become a traitor to the teachings of Faith and Truth" (St. Gregory the Theologian).

Over the years, the Soviet regime has produced a new type of bishop completely unknown in the history of the Church — a political shyster and administrator, although a bishop is not so much an administrator as a teacher: his basic concern is teaching. A bishop is called to teach by example of his own life. In his letter to Titus, the Apostle Paul, speaking of the appointment of a bishop, writes that a bishop must be *blameless, as the steward of God, not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, not violent, not given to filthy lucre, but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober-minded, just, holy, temperate, holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to confute the opposers*" (Titus 1: 7-9).

The consecration of a bishop is preceded by the special ritual of his nomination, his solemn confession of the Faith before the people of the Church, as well as his taking of a special oath, which says, in part:

"Moreover, I also pledge that I shall do nothing under compulsion, even though compelled by powerful persons [i. e. those in power] or by a multitude of people, if they even will threaten me with death, demanding that I do ought which is contrary to the divine and sacred canons."

Many people believe that Patriarch Alexis II was elected by the free will of the bishops of the Moscow Patriarchate. However, according to the newly uncovered documents, during the days of preparation for the Local Council of 1990, Kryuchkov, the head of the KGB and the future participant in the abortive coup d'état, dispatched a special encoded telegram to all directorates of the KGB, suggesting that they facilitate the election of Alexis (Ridiger), the Metropolitan of Leningrad, to the Patriarchal throne. Would the KGB operatives within the Church, who were gathered for the Council, have dared to disobey their boss Kryuchkov?

Over the last few years, not a single "Drozdov", "Antonov", "Abbot", "Mikhailov", "Adamant", "Ostrovsky", and others as yet undisclosed, — not one of these "agents in cas-socks" has provided an example of repentance... NOT A SINGLE ONE!

The bishops of the Moscow Patriarchate not only fail to manifest an example of repentance, they are proceeding even further along the path of self-justification. At the Council of Bishops (at the St. Daniel Monastery in late March - early April, 1992), the present head of the Moscow Patriarchate went so far as to characterize as "libel" the irrefutable evidence of cooperation between the hierarchs and the KGB. Thus, on the first day of the Council, setting the tone for the further course of the Council's discussion, the Patriarch stated that the many problems of Church life "have to a large degree been artificially created from the outside, with the goal of further alienating the people of God from the Church. [...] Some media [...] are taking part in an unseemly campaign of slander against the Church by denigrating Her servants."

Thus, according to the Patriarch, the problems of Church life "...are artificially created from without! Who are they created by? What unknown forces are "alienating the people of God from the Church"? These problems have been engendered by Sergianism and the refusal to repent of it. It is precisely this which is alienating the children of God from the Church.

A commission has been established to investigate the links between the hierarchs and clergy, and the KGB. It consists of eight young

bishops ordained during the period of *perestroika*. The leadership of the Moscow Patriarchate is using this fact as a cover, emphasizing their supposed freedom from the influence of the KGB, but is also proceeding along its own infamous course by "exposing" these same young hierarchs. The young bishops are confronted with a natural alternative: either find the means to vindicate the "actions" of the agent-hierarchs, confirming Alexis II's statement on the alleged campaign of slander initiated by the press against the Church and establishing that the press is guilty of lying; or, admitting the importance and vital necessity of giving answers to directly asked questions, to deprive themselves of the patronage of those against whom those terrible charges had been leveled, *i. e.*, in the Patriarch's words, to face the possibility of "ending their days somewhere in a monastery", far from their diocesan sees.

With the help of the commission created at the Council, the hierarchs, collaborating with the KGB, try to effect a delay and, like an ostrich, bury their heads in the sand. But our conscience is not before men, but before God Himself. In the words of St. Ephraim the Syrian: "If we are ashamed before men, then how much more ought we to be ashamed before, and at the same time, fear God, Who knows all the secrets of men. It is He Who will judge the whole world and render unto each according to his deeds."

"Now is not the time to criticize the Patriarch and the Moscow Patriarchate and to gloat over their situation." I agree. God forbid that we should gloat! But in what way should we assist them? To pretend that everything is fine, that we will take no further notice of this Judas-like sin of treason, their informing and bearing of false witness, that we will no longer urge them to take the splendid road of repentance? We read in the Scriptures: *He who covereth his own ungodliness shall not prosper: but he who blameth himself shall be loved*" (Prov. 28: 13).

The pages of today's national periodicals from the column "Let us look into the Church Calendar" in *Kommersant* to lengthy articles in *Izvestia*, *Nedelya* and *Moskovskie novosti*, abound in various data on religious subjects.

In the last few months, the name of Deacon Andrei Kuraev has become very prominent. He has published articles in which he

honestly and frankly admits that not only he, who received his theological education at the Moscow Seminary and the Theological Academy in Romania, and at the writing of this article was employed as an aide to the Patriarch, but also a good half of the priests of the Moscow Patriarchate in one way or the another collaborated with the KGB (see *Russkaya mysl'* Feb. 28, 1992, in Russian). Deacon Kuraev admits: Yes, it was a sin. Yes, it did happen... But then it was every other man! Also the KGB is exaggerating. They also have their own lists. And in general, it is all their provocation: they are sinking and dragging us, the Orthodox, down with them, defaming and discrediting us ("Posmetrnyi triunu' komiteta", *Moskovskie novosti*, March 8, 1992, [in Russian]). And not once in any of his writings does Deacon Andrei Kuraev mention the need to repent!

If it is indeed, as you write, Fr. Deacon, "our common national and social sin, which in the person of the Church's pastors has only been focused more clearly, fully and grievously," shouldn't the pastors show an example of repentance to those who do not know what it is?

It would be interesting to ask Deacon Andrei Kuraev: How is it that you, who consider yourself an Orthodox Christian, which obligates you to live in the spirit of Truth and in the power of righteousness, took the path of clandestine collaboration with the security services, as you admit in the pages of your articles? What compels you to resort not only to self-justification, but to exonerating and defending your mentors 'the bishops of the Moscow Patriarchate, who carry the burden of 30 or 40 years of work in the KGB? Your public semi-confession testifies to the "ultimate triumph of the Committee" (the KGB - V.P.), an example of a brilliant solution of one of the objectives of the godless: to weaken the Church by perverting the confession of the Faith. How many more aides do they have like you?

In his article "Generation of Vipers" (August, 1967), Boris Talantov, a contemporary Confessor², denounced the pseudo-pastors and called upon the Russian people:

2 Boris Vladimirovich Talantov was at that time a 65-year-old teacher of mathematics, the son of a priest who perished in Stalin's camps, the author of several articles on the deplorable state of the Russian Orthodox Church.

"The Patriarchate's leaders are betraying the Church, refusing to follow the brilliant confession of Patriarch Tikhon, Metropolitans Peter of Krutitsa, Cyril of Kazan, Joseph of Petrograd, and a host of other confessors, who refused to allow the Church administration to be used to advance the internal and external policies of the godless regime.

"The Patriarchate's leaders are betraying the Church, refusing to defend the rights of the Orthodox majority of the Russian people to give their children and the youth a Christian education...

"...IN PRESERVING UNITY, THEY [the children of the Church - V.P.] MUST BEGIN A NATION-WIDE DENUNCIATION OF THE CORRUPT PSEUDO-PASTORS AND A CLEANSING OF THEM FROM THE CHURCH."

If the leaders of the Moscow Patriarchate do not have the strength to set an example of repentance for their flock, LET THEM STEP ASIDE, as was suggested by the Bishops at Solovki to Metropolitan Sergius, and surrender their sees to archpastors who are able to take this narrow path.

Fr. George Edelstein correctly writes:

"The Sergianists lie, not at all because they may be exiled to hard labor and not because a pistol is being held to the back of their heads, but only because they are Sergianists: lying is their doctrine; they believe and profess that the Church must be saved by lying. This is their first and greatest commandment (*Chitava i*

perechityvaya classihu, a pamphlet published by Monastery Press, Montreal, 1992).

True repentance is the only way to bring an end to this falsehood. But in any case these hierarchs will not escape the spiritual judgement which can and must take place under the conditions of the conciliar pleroma of the Russian Orthodox Church, because there is no point in talking about ecclesiastical judgement within the Moscow Patriarchate: impartial ecclesiastical judgement is absent from its very structure. The Synod holds full authority over the Church's life in its own hands, just as is done by the Italian Mafia or the Politburo. Since, according to the Statutes of the Moscow Patriarchate, the decisions of any ecclesiastical court (reviewing complaints, non-canonical activities of bishops and clergy, etc.) are referred to the Synod itself, it would be naive to expect its members to condemn themselves, and not keep secret all their evildeings.

Bishop Alexander of Kostroma and Galich, head of the Church Commission investigating the KGB documents, has expressed his apprehension that disclosing all the sins committed by stubborn self-justification amid obvious sins would be even more confusing to "these little ones," and so others would be completely alienated from the Church!

Everybody knows the expression: "to tell tales out of school". The Russians say "To carry litter out of the house." But if you keep that

A letter composed by him and signed by 12 believers from the Kirov District, was sent abroad and was broadcast by the BBC into the USSR. Metropolitan Nikodim (Rotov), who managed the external relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, was questioned on this issue by the French newspaper *Humanité*. Metropolitan Nikodim stated that this letter was anonymous, and the facts concerning the oppression of the Church by the authorities presented in it did not coincide with reality. The local KGB tried to obtain from the authors of the letter confirmation of Metropolitan Nikodim's statement. The pressure was such that three of the signers died; the seminarian N. Kamenskikh was expelled from the seminary; but not a single signatory retracted his signature. Moreover, in an open letter, Talantov confirmed the validity of the facts testifying to the persecution of the Church, which were set forth in the letter of the twelve. In 1969, he was arrested, sentenced to three years imprisonment for "libel", and died in the prison hospital.

The struggle of Boris Talantov is also striking because he acted deep within provincial Russia, not in a

major population center. Anatoly Levitin-Krasnov wrote about this at the time:

"During those difficult times, when more than 10,000 churches were shut down within a period of two to three years (during Krushchev's regime), when each day brought more news of the latest acts of brigandage — at the Pochaev Monastery, in other monasteries of Moldavia and the Ukraine, — when newspapers and magazines were full of dirty slander levelled at the believers, and the hierarchs never budged, afraid to utter a word in defense of the Church: at that time a humble teacher from Vyatka was locked in a mortal struggle for the Church; he used his words, he waged war with his pen, writing lucid letters to all levels of government, denouncing the arbitrariness of the local authorities and the criminal permissiveness of the hierarchs. It was difficult for him, an old man. He was utterly alone in the province, there were no cultured people around, no courageous comrades-in-arms. For in the province people are more docile than in Moscow, the authorities are more independent, their arbitrariness more cynical (*Posev* Oct. 1969, *Drama v Vyatke*, p. 6, in Russian).

litter in the house all the time, it will inevitably become filled with an unbearable stench, and it will become impossible to live in such a house. There will come a time when it will become vitally important to remove the accumulated garbage from the Russian house, to air and to clean it thoroughly. The Church teaches us continually, through repentance, to clean the litter from our houses — our human souls.

Trusting in earthly "saviors", keeping silent for the sake of a bogus peace, and the resulting trampling of the Law of God, prepares the world for the coming of Antichrist.

The mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now restraineth will continue to restrain until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that wicked one be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of His

mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming, even him whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth, that they should believe the lie, that they all might be judged who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness (II Thess. 2: 7-12).

If the Russian people do not repent for *not believing truth* and not confessing the Truth as did the New Martyrs, then, just as they accepted in silence the pseudo-leaders of the Moscow Patriarchate, so will they also accept Antichrist. For *with the mouth confession is made unto salvation* (Rom. 10: 10), while **BY SILENCE IS GOD BETRAYED** (St. Gregory the Theologian).

5. The Moscow Patriarchate and Ecumenism

Instead of love, I call it misanthropy and apostasy from divine love,
when one promotes a heretical error
to the greater destruction of those who hold to that error.
— St. Maximus the Confessor

Within the context of our discussion we cannot fail to touch upon ecumenism, another extremely important subject which is a stumbling block on the path to unifying the Russian Orthodox Church.

In socio-cultural, national and international fellowship of love and charity toward those who remain outside the Church, infinite horizons of fraternal and useful cooperation are disclosed to us. How timely and useful it would be for the Christians to present a united front, to lift up their voice for the rebirth of the best of the desecrated culture of all mankind, to stand up against all manner of ungodliness, in defense of the right, honor, and dignity of the spiritual-rational personality of men, which is being trampled in a world which lies in evil.

One has to welcome rejection of age-old separation of Christians, but only if this is done with the objective of disclosing the treasures of Orthodoxy, to bring those who have fallen away from the Church back to unity in Orthodoxy.

It is with just this purpose that, as far back as before the Revolution of 1917, the Russian

Orthodox Church conducted an active dialogue with both the Anglicans and the Old Catholics. In the diaspora, the hierarchs and the theologians of the Russian Church Abroad continued these discussions and even participated as observers at some ecumenical forums. The attitude of the Church Abroad toward ecumenism has always been of a sober, strictly Orthodox character, in accordance with the teachings of the Holy Fathers. The outlook of this Church was particularly well-defined in a statement issued on December 31, 1931, when the Russian Church Abroad appointed a representative to the Committee for the Continuation of the World Conference on Faith and Order:

"Preserving the Faith in the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, the Synod of Bishops confesses that the Church has never been divided. The issue lies only in who does and who does not belong to Her. Moreover, the Synod of Bishops fervently greets all attempts by the heterodox to study the teaching of Christ about the Church, in the hope that through such an investigation,

especially with the participation of representatives of the Holy Orthodox Church, they will eventually arrive at the conviction that the Orthodox Church, which is the *pillar and the ground of truth* (I Tim. 3: 15), fully and without any adulteration has retained the doctrine taught by Christ the Savior to His disciples. With this Faith and such hope, the Synod of Bishops gratefully accepts the invitation of the Committee for the Continuation of the World Conference on Faith and Order" (quoted in "A Sorrowful Epistle" by Metropolitan Philaret (Voznesensky) June 14/27, 1969. *Pravoslavnaya Rus'*, No. 15, 1969 [Jordanville, N.Y.], in Russian).

Such was the invariable, long-held position of the Russian Church Abroad in relation to the Ecumenical Movement. But since 1962, *i. e.*, from the moment when that organization was joined by the Moscow Patriarchate, the statements issued by the World Council of Churches took on such a radically leftist theological tone and were filled with such pro-Communist content, that the continued attendance at those interconfessional forums became impossible for the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad.

The Ecumenical Movement, in which the Moscow Patriarchate plays so prominent a role, takes as its guiding principle the Protestant view of the Church. The Protestants hold that there is no single truth and no single Church, but that each of the many Christian denominations possesses a particle of the truth, and that these relative truths can, by means of dialogue, lead to the One Truth and the One Church. One of the ways of attaining this unity, as perceived by the ideologues of the Ecumenical Movement, is the holding of joint prayers and religious services, so that in time communion from a common chalice (intercommunion) will be achieved.

Orthodoxy can never accept such an ecclesiology, for it believes and bears witness that there is no need to assemble particles of the truth, since the Orthodox Church is the repository of the fullness of the Truth, which was given to Her on the day of the Holy Pentecost.

Still, the Orthodox Church does not forbid its members to pray for those who are outside Her Communion. Through the prayers by the holy and righteous John of Kronstadt and the

blessed Archbishop John (Maximovich), Protestants and Catholics, as well as Jews and Moslems, indeed even Pagans, have received healing. Yet, acting on this faith and their pleas, these and others of our righteous have at the same time taught them that the Truth of salvation is to be found only in Orthodoxy.

A remarkable example of the correct Orthodox approach to the heterodox world is provided to us by Protopresbyter Florus Zholtkevich:

"The Father in the Gospel parable, perhaps more than once went out to the road to see whether his son was returning, yet he himself did not leave his home, but awaited his return. Thus also does the One Universal Church patiently await the return of all to its bosom. And we, her faithful children, pray continually. Let the whole heterodox world come to an understanding of the universal, eternal, infallible and immutable Truth of Christ, and with us let them glorify the all-pure and majestic name of God Who is worshipped in Trinity" (*Pravoslavnaya Rus'*; "Pravoslavie i Ekumenizm," Jordanville, N.Y. No. 1, p. 4, [in Russian]).

For the Orthodox, joint prayer and Communion at the liturgy is an expression of an already existing unity within the bounds of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. St. Irenaeus of Lyons (2nd century) concisely expressed this: "Our Faith is in accord with the Eucharist, and the Eucharist confirms our Faith." The Holy Fathers of the Church teach that the members of the Church comprise the Church — the Body of Christ — because in the Eucharist they partake of the Body and the Blood of Christ. Outside the Eucharist and Communion there is no Church. Communing together would be an admission that all those receiving Communion belong to the One Apostolic Church, whereas the realities of Christian history even of our time unfortunately point out the deep dogmatic and ecclesiastical division of the Christian world.

How many times have we heard and read in the official statements of the World Council of Churches (WCC) of the necessity for showing Christian compassion to the needy of the world. This is undoubtedly a wonderful idea, very much in the spirit of the Gospel, against which one may hardly speak. It is good to express sympathy for the blacks of South Africa

or for those suffering amid the upheavals in the Middle East, Indochina, and other places. But did these comprise all of the human sufferings in those years? The WCC was very well informed about the situation of believers in the USSR but it never uttered a single word about the millions of martyred Christians, it never came to the defense of those who were subjected to persecution by the Communist regimes of Khrushchev and Brezhnev.

Here is a typical example: In 1975, the Fifth Assembly of the WCC met in Nairobi. The Council's leadership was quite disconcerted by publication in the Assembly's newspaper of a letter by priest Gleb Yakunin and Lev Regelson, entitled "An Appeal on Behalf of the Persecuted Christians". The authors of the letter complained that the Council was not raising its voice in defense of the decimated Russian Orthodox Church and of the completely eradicated Churches in Albania. Mentioned in the letter was the shameful fact that the WCC had said nothing even when a priest was shot in Albania for having baptized a newly born baby. Yakunin and Regelson tried to persuade the delegates of the WCC not to harbor any illusions with regard to the representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate in the WCC, who were fulfilling the objectives of the Soviet government and pursuing the strategic goals of the Communist Party of the USSR.

The few timid attempts by a number of delegates at this Assembly to issue an official statement on the problem of the persecution of believers met with no success because of opposition by Philip Potter, the General Secretary of the World Council Churches, and the Moscow delegation headed by Metropolitan Juvenaly (alias agent "Adamant").¹

¹ In 1973, two years before the Assembly in Nairobi, Philip Potter, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, visited Moscow and met with representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate. In one of the KGB reports discovered by the Parliamentary Commission, one reads the following:

"Visiting the USSR as a guest of the Moscow Patriarchate was Philip Potter, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, upon whom an advantageous... influence has been achieved by agents "Sviatoslav", "Adamant", "Mikhailov", and "Ostrovsky". Operationally meaningful data have been obtained on the activities of the World Council of Churches. Head of the 4th Department of the

In connection with this let us note the activities of the last two Assemblies of the WCC. We have taken this information not from an Orthodox source, but from the Lutheran weekly *Christian News* (April 1-8, 1991). Published in the journal is an account by the Lutheran theologian John Millheim of this ecumenical encounter, which exposes the spiritual bankruptcy of the WCC:

"When the guests and delegates to the 7th Assembly of the WCC gathered under a large tent for prayer on the evening of the opening, they were welcomed by male aborigines performing the dance "corroboree" (a festive dance performed during celebrations of tribal victories and similar events). They danced around a fire from which rose a large cloud of smoke, through which the worshippers [i. e. the Christians] passed. They [the assembled worshippers] were told that in this way, by passing through this cleansing cloud of smoke, the spirituality of the aborigines merged with Christian spirituality."

Further in his account, John Millheim recalls the similarly pagan opening of the ecumenical meeting at the Sixth Assembly of the WCC in Vancouver, Canada, in 1983:²

"...The North American Indians of that locality [the province of British Columbia — V.P.] had carved a totem pole for the WCC, which Philip Potter the WCC General Secretary and others erected, as a symbol of celebration of unity in the divine services. When that totem pole was delivered to the assembly of the WCC, the assembled delegates were told that the Indians had come with their spirit of god to welcome and take part in the assembly. Moreover, the very opening of the Vancouver Assembly was accompanied by Indian dances and prayers."

The strange smoke, the totem pole, the invocations of the spirits of the dead, are an in-

5th-Directorate of the KGB, subsidiary to the Council of Ministers of the USSR, Lieutenant Kubishkin (DD. 101-12, 1973, in Russian)."

² In KGB archival documents it is recorded that "...among the religious delegation of the USSR... [to the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Vancouver]... 47 agents of the organs of the KGB were sent among the religious officials, clergymen and technical personnel." N.N. Romanov (p. 191, July, 1983)."

In other words, it is a fact that the entire delegation of the Moscow Patriarchate to the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches was in the service of the KGB!

separable part of the religious pluralism and paganism that is to be expected at each Assembly of the WCC.

This infusion of non-Christian religious practices into Christianity is a typical trend and predilection of the WCC in accordance with its agenda for the 1990's.

Another article, published in the same issue of *Christian News*, adds important details to the above-cited account of the WCC meeting in Canberra. In it one finds an account of the address delivered by Chiung Hiun-Kiung, a woman pastor of the Presbyterian Church in South Korea:

"Her speech began with a ceremonial dance with two male aborigines and several Koreans. She invited those present to 'step with me [with her] on the holy ground, first taking off your shoes, while we dance to prepare the way for the Spirit.' Many obeyed.

"Then, with candles burning on either side, she began to invoke the spirits. She read the names of the spirits of the dead from a printed sheet which she subsequently burned, scattering the ashes into the air. Among the dead spirits she invoked were Hagar, Uriah, the infants murdered by Herod, Joan of Arc, the Jews killed in gas chambers, Mahatma Ghandi, Steve Biko, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and finally 'the Spirit of the Liberator, our Brother Jesus, tormented and slain on the cross.'"

Further on, the article in *Christian News* relates how Chiung Hiun-Kiung glorified Korean animism, goddesses, especially Bodhisatva, who gives strength "to swim to the shores of Nirvana", and the goddess Kuan Yin, whom she identified with the Holy Spirit. According to Chiung Hiun Kiung, Bodhisatva is awaiting for the world to be enlightened, and then people, trees, birds, mountains, air and water will be able to immerse themselves together in Nirvana, where they will be able to live collectively in eternal wisdom and compassion. To this Chiung Hiun Kiung added:

Could this be the female form of Christ, Who was the first-born among us, and Who is forging ahead and leading others behind Him?

In conclusion, the author of the article wrote that Chiung Hiun-Kiung concluded her performance at the Assembly of the WCC with one more dance with an aborigine. However.. "ear the sake of decency" the author chose not to describe this dance.

Proponents of the contemporary ecumenical movement not only fail to advance unity, but deepen the division of the Christian world. Rather than follow a narrow path of salvation in confessing the One Truth, they call upon us to take the wide path of unity with those who confess all manner of errors about which the holy Apostle Peter said that *by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of* (ii Pet. 2: 1-2).

In the past the WCC called for unity among Christians. Now this organization seeks unity with pagans. The World Council of Churches has embraced religious syncretism. This position is leading to an obliteration of the differences between religious denominations, with the purpose of creating one universal world religion which would be made up of something from each religion. The universal world religion also implies a universal world government with one economic order, and one world nation — a fusion of all existing nations, with a single leader. If this is really brought about, it would indeed provide a seed-bed for the reign of Antichrist.

Let us also mention the lamentable and infamous ecumenical prayer assembly which was organized several years ago by the Pope of Rome at Assisi, and in which non-Christians took part. To what deity did the assembled religious personages, among whom were representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate, pray? At the assembly the Pope of Rome told the non-Christians that "they believe in the true God."

The true God is the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is worshipped within the triune Trinity. Do non-Christians believe in the Holy Trinity? Can Christians pray to an unspecified deity? Such prayer is heresy, pure and simple.

Ecumenism, according to the eminent Orthodox Theologian, Archimandrite Justin (Popovich), is the "Pan-Heresy".³

3 A Serbian theologian who exhaustively explains the Orthodox point of view on the problem of ecumenism in his book *Orthodoxy and Ecumenism* (Salonica, 1974). Ecumenism has also been described with extreme clarity by the First Hierarchs of the Russian Church Abroad, Metropolitan Philaret (in his two "Sorrowful Epistles") and Metropolitan Vitaly, and by Archbishop Averky (Taushev) in his many articles and sermons. See also the book by the American Hieromonk Seraphim (Rose) *Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future*, Platina, California, 1979).

At the insistence of the godless regime, the Moscow Patriarchate joined the WCC in 1962, in order to carry out the Soviets' external policies and disinformation within the framework of this organization. Who is forcing it to participate in this organization at the present time? Why does it not abandon this semi-pagan organization in light of its complete degeneration? For decades the Moscow Patriarchate has shown zeal for the world ecumenical movement, thereby violating a whole series of Church canons.

Several representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate maintain that by their formal membership in the World Council of Churches they testify to the Truth which abides in the Orthodox Church. But the blatant violation of the canons testifies more to a violation of the Sacred Tradition of the Church than to a confession of Truth.

The 15th canon of the First-Second Council of Constantinople (861) reads:

"...Those persons who, on the other hand, because of some heresy condemned by holy Councils, or Fathers, withdraw themselves from communion with their president who, that is to say, is preaching the heresy publicly and teaching it bareheaded in the church, such persons not only are not subject to any canonical penalty on account of their having walled themselves off from any and all communion with the one called a bishop before any conciliar or synodal verdict has been rendered, but, on the contrary, they shall be deemed worthy to enjoy the honor which befits them among Orthodox Christians. For they have defied, not bishops, but pseudo-bishops and pseudo-teachers; and they have not sundered the unity of the Church with any schism, but, on the contrary, have been sedulous to rescue the Church from schisms and divisions."⁴

4 To avoid false interpretations of this canon, we cite here the interpretation of the 15th canon by a canonist of the highest authority, Bishop Nicodemus of Dalmatia and Istria:

"...If any of the bishops, metropolitans or patriarchs begin to preach some heretic doctrine contrary to Orthodoxy, then the rest of the clergy and ministers of the Church are justified in and even obligated to separate themselves immediately from the aforementioned bishop, metropolitan or patriarch, for which they are not only not subjected to any canonical punishment, but on the contrary, are to be deemed worthy of praise, for thereby they have not condemned or revolted against genuine, lawful bishops, but

Neo-Renovationism and Ecumenism are inseparable components of Sergianism and are openly preached by the hierarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate. The *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate* is replete with reports and photographs of Protestant pastors preaching in the Orthodox churches of Russia with the approval of and even in the presence of the bishops. And now many of these Western preachers look upon Russia as a broad field for the dissemination of their teachings. And why shouldn't they? All these years they were led to believe that the Moscow Patriarchate was a champion of the ecumenical movement.

What would be the reaction of the pillars of Orthodoxy, the holy Fathers of the Church — Saints Athanasius the Great, Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, John Chrysostom, Mark of Ephesus, and others — to the participation of Orthodox Christians in the modern ecumenical movement?

Let us end this discussion of ecumenism and turn to antiquity, and cite testimony from the life of St. Maximus the Confessor, who shows how Orthodox Christians must comport themselves when confronted with apostasy — the massive abandoning of the Truth of Christ.

against false bishops, false teachers; and they have not thereby formed a schism within the Church, but on the contrary, as far as they were able have freed the Church from schism and averted division. Archimandrite John (later Bishop of Smolensk), in accordance with the historic circumstances of the Russian Church, notes quite correctly and in the strict sense of the canonical science, in his interpretation of this canon, that a priest will not be guilty, but rather worthy of praise, for separating from his bishop, if the latter "preaches any heretical doctrine contrary to the Orthodox Church", and if a) "he teaches a doctrine clearly opposed to the teaching of the Catholic Church and which has already been condemned by the Holy Fathers or Councils, and not any private speculation which might not be shown to anyone to be incorrect and which contain anything of importance, so that it may be corrected without accusations of deliberate unorthodoxy"; and if b) "the false teaching is preached [by him] openly, before the people in church, when, i. e., it is already carefully thought out and is intended as a blatant contradiction of the Church, and not merely uttered privately, when while in this private way it may yet be re-proved and renounced, without destroying the peace of the Church" (*Pravila Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi s tollwvaniami*, [St. Petersburg, St. Petersburg Theological Academy, 1912], vol. H, pp. 308-390), (in Russian)).

"Will you not then enter into communion with the see of Constantinople?" St. Maximus the Confessor was asked by the Patricians Troilus and Sergius Euphrates, the chief of the royal table.

"No," replied the Saint.

"Why so?," they asked,

"Because," replied the Saint, "the leaders of this Church have rejected the resolutions of the four holy Councils... and have excommunicated themselves from the Church many times over and accused each of erroneous thinking..."

"Then you alone will be saved, and all others will perish," they objected.

To this the Saint replied:

"When all the people in Babylon were worshipping the golden idol, the three holy children did not condemn anyone to perdition. They did not concern themselves with the doings of others, but took care only for themselves, lest they should fall away from true piety. In precisely the same way, when Daniel was cast into the lion's den, he did not condemn any of those who, fulfilling the law of Darius, did not wish to pray to God, but he kept in mind his own duty, and desired to die rather than to sin

against his conscience by transgressing the Law of God. God forbid that I should condemn anyone or say that I alone am being saved! However, I shall sooner agree to die than to apostatize in any way from the true Faith and thereby suffer torments of conscience."

"But what will you do," inquired the envoys, "when the Romans are united to the Byzantines? Yesterday, indeed, two legates arrived from Rome, and tomorrow, the Lord's day, they will have communicated the Mysteries with the Patriarch."

The Saint replied:

"Even if the whole universe holds communion with the Patriarch, I will not communicate with him. For I know from the writings of the holy Apostle Paul: the Holy Spirit declares that even the angels would be anathema if they should begin to preach another Gospel, introducing some new teachings."⁵

Holy father Maximus, pray unto God for us!

⁵ Transl. by Protodeacon Christopher Birchall, in *The Life of Our Holy Father Maximus the Confessor* [Boston: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 1982], pp. 37-39.

(continued from issue #94; to be concluded in issue #101)

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THE "KURSK" ICON WITH RUSSIAN REFUGEES IN GERMANY

The Bolsheviks had occupied the Balkans, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria. The Soviet Army had entered Yugoslavia. Metropolitan Anastassy, as the Head of the free Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, could not and had no desire to fall captive to the godless ones; and so, with the multitude of his dedicated flock, he left for Germany. With the Synod, departed also its guardian: the Wonderworking "Kursk" Icon of the Mother of God. It left Belgrade on the 8th of September, 1944, having been in that country for just less than a quarter of a century.

The first stage on its journey to the West was the city of Vienna. It was there several months with the Synod. At that time Vienna often underwent aerial bombardments. Yet by the mercy of the Queen of Heaven, even in this heterodox city the same kind of miracles began to occur, as had happened in Belgrade. Those apartments where the icon had been and those people who invited it into their homes remained whole and unharmed, although at times they were located in the center of bombardments.

This is how eyewitnesses describe Divine Liturgy under a hail of bombs: "...At the beginning of Liturgy the church was filled with people. It was an overcast day. Snow was falling. Even though it was morning, everything was dark as if only twilight. But in our souls there was a light and joyous feeling, for with us was the Wonderworking Icon and our beloved First-hierarchy. The eyes of those praying were fixed upon our Lady's face, darkened by time. At both cliroses were crowds of people going to confession. The "White" refugees mixed with the new-comers from the German labor camps located in Vienna. I think that everyone who came to church that day went to confession and received Holy Communion.

"I was immeasurably happy to be with the "Kursk" Wonderworking Icon, which had become so dear to me, and to be in the presence of

Vladika Metropolitan. I considered this to be a good sign. Everyone was quietly whispering prayers to themselves, expressing hope that on such a stormy day there would not be any bombing. Alas, suddenly sirens began to whine and soon a terrible bombardment began.

"They were bombing Florisdorf, the industrial section of this city of a million inhabitants. The distant rumble did not interrupt the Liturgy. The First-hierarchy and priests calmly chanted their respective exclamations. The choir sang solemnly. Even the most easily frightened and weak of spirit did not flee the church. God was with us. Everyone's eyes looked with hope upon the Icon and upon the meek face of Vladika.

"Explosions from the bombs drew nearer. The Church shook; glass rattled. Everyone present had a triumphantly peaceful expression. People received Holy Communion, approached to venerate the Wonderworking Icon and receive a blessing from the meek, venerable Metropolitan. The Divine Service was complete; and, simultaneously, the all-clear signal was sounded. In the hands of those leaving the church were little copies of the Wonderworking Icon of our Mediatrix, as well as prosphora-loaves.

"Snow was coming down in large flakes. An evil, dark cloud of smoke spread across the sky. Right nearby houses were on fire. The picture was horrifying. All around everything was burning, because they had dropped fire bombs. The streets were littered with broken glass. There was a house burning in front of the cathedral, the same catty-corner from it. Behind the cathedral and next to it several bombs had dropped. Not one bit of glass had fallen out of the windows on the cathedral..."

"Russian Orthodox Church Calendar for 1995" (in Russian), Jordanville, NY, pg. 227. Translated for *Living Orthodoxy* by Fr. Paul Volmensky.

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